Typology of Languages

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1. What is Typology

- Common Definition

Typology is roughly synonymous with classification, in which the phenomenon of a domain under study are classified into types according to certain common features. (Croft, 1)
2. Linguistic Definitions

- Typological Classification

This is the broadest linguistic classification of languages, in which languages are classified into different types according to their structures by using cross-linguistic comparison. (Croft, 1)
Typological Classification

For example:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Word Order</th>
<th>Tone</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>English:</td>
<td>SVO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chinese:</td>
<td>SVO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Japanese:</td>
<td>SOV</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- English: not tonal
- Japanese: not tonal
- Chinese: tonal
Typology Proper

This is a more specific definition of typology, which is a kind of empirical and methodological analysis that aims to find linguistic patterns of all languages by using cross-linguistic comparison.

Those patterns can also be called “universals” which include features existing in all languages and dependencies between these features. (Croft, 1)
Example: the implicational universal

If the word order of a language is VSO, then the adjectives of the language almost always follow the nouns.

VSO > NA

(Croft, 52)
(Functional-) typological approach

This is a more specific definition of typology which represents an approach to linguistic theorizing.

This view of typology is the hypothesis that linguistic structure should be explained primarily in terms of linguistic function (represented by Greenberg) instead of formalism (represented by Chomsky). (Croft, 2)
What is a Linguistic Universal?

A linguistic universal is cross-linguistic generalization, that is, a pattern existing in all languages.

Types of Linguistic Universal?

- Unrestricted Universal
- Implicational Universal
"An unrestricted universal is an assertion that all languages belong to a particular grammatical type on some features, and the other types on the same features are not attested (or are extremely rare)." (Croft, 46)

For example:  All languages have nouns.
     All languages have verbs.

Such unrestricted universals are relatively few and require deeper explanation such as why all languages distinguish nouns and verbs.
Implicational Universal

Implicational universals differ from unrestricted universals in that they do not assert that all languages belong to one type. Instead, they describe restrictions on logically possible language types that limit linguistic variation but do not eliminate it. (Croft, 47)

There are simple implicational universals with a dependency between two logically independent features and complex implicational universals (Hawkins in Croft, 52) with a dependency between more than two features. (Croft, 47)
Implicational Universal

For example:

**Simple Implicational Universal**

if a language is SOV, then the genitive precedes the noun.

\[
\text{SOV} > \text{GN}
\]

(Croft, 52)

**Complex implicational universal**

if a language is SOV, then if the adjective precedes the noun, then the genitive precedes the noun.

\[
\text{SOV} > (\text{AN} > \text{GN})
\]

(Hawkins in Croft, 52)
What criteria do we have to compare structures across languages?

The fundamental prerequisite for cross-linguistic comparison is cross-linguistic comparability, namely, how to identify the “same” grammatical phenomenon across languages, such grammatical categories as “subjects”, “verbs” and so on.

(Croft, 11)

Solution:

To achieve adequacy at every level of generalization, typological analysis needs a combination of formal and functional approaches including analysis of word order, morphosyntax and semantics (-pragmatics).

For example: He **is playing** football in the school (SVOC) Tazhengzaixuexiaoti qiu. (SCVO)
Reference:
